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SOON, YOU COULD WITHDRAW CASH ON TRAINS USING ATM

The Central Railway has installed an ATM onboard the Panchavati Express on an experimental basis, officials said. The ATM, provided by the Bank of Maharashtra, has been put up in a cubicle at the rear end of the air-conditioned chair car coach coach, a space earlier used as a makeshift pantry. Passengers can withdraw cash even when the train is moving. To ensure their safety, a shutter door has been provided. The train runs between Mumbai and Mammad in Nashik | P9

Interim SC order curbing parts of Waqf Act likely

3-judge bench led by CJI gives govt additional day to present its case

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY
@ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Wednesday stopped short of passing interim orders restricting certain sections of the controversial Waqf (Amendment) Act from coming into play, giving the government a day more to present its case in detail.

A three-judge bench led by the Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna said it will pass interim orders on Thursday on various aspects, including the contentious "waqf by user" issue. The court said normally it does not pass interim orders, but would make an exception in the present case.

"Properties declared by courts as waqfs should not be de-notified, whether they are by waqf-by-user or deed waqf," the bench said.

The petitioners claimed that the Act tramples several fundamental rights, including the right to equality and the right to pursue religious practices and others.

The bench asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta how 'waqf by user' can be disallowed as many will not have the requisite documents to get them registered. 'Waqf by user' refers to those properties that are deemed as waqf based solely on prolonged use for religious purposes.

Referring to the provision to de-notify properties declared as waqf long ago, the CJI said history cannot be rewritten through amendments to the waqf law. "When a public trust is declared to be a waqf 100 or 200 years ago, suddenly you say it is being taken over by the Waqf Board and declared otherwise," CJI Khanna said.

The bench will also address the issue of religious composition of the members of the Waqf Boards and the Central Waqf Council. The judges asked the law officer whether Muslims would be allowed to be part of Hindu religious trusts. "Are you saying that from now on, you will allow Muslims to be part of the Hindu endowment boards?" the court asked.

The court said that under the Act, only eight out of 22 members of the Waqf Council would be Muslims. But Mehta said not more than two non-Muslim members, apart from ex-officio ones, would be included in the Waqf Council. There was brief tension when Mehta appeared to question the neutrality of the all-Hindu bench. "When we sit here, we shed our personal identities. For us, all parties are equal before the law. That comparison is entirely misplaced," the bench said.

EXCEPTION IN THE PRESENT CASE: CJI

"Ordinarily, courts do not interfere at the admission stage when a law is passed. But this case may warrant an exception. If a property declared as waqf by user is denotified, it can have grave ramifications," Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna said

VIOLENCE IN PROTESTS VERY DISTURBING

CJI Sanjiv Khanna expressed serious concern over widespread violence during protests against the Act in West Bengal. "One thing is very disturbing is the violence that is taking place. If the matter is pending here it should not happen," the CJI said

Choice of acting head out of sync with UGC Act

SHEKHAR SINGH @ New Delhi

A recent decision by the Union ministry of Education to appoint the Secretary of Higher Education, Dr Vineet Joshi, as the acting Chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC), has stirred controversy, with legal experts and insiders flagging a potential violation of the UGC Act.

The order, dated April 11, reads: "Dr Vineet Joshi, Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education is hereby entrusted the additional charge of the post of Chairman, UGC till the appointment of a regular Chairman, UGC or till he ceases to be Member, UGC or until further orders, whichever is the earliest."

However, the order isn't aligned with provisions in Chapter II of the UGC Act. Section 5(2) of the UGC Act says upfront, "The Chairman shall be chosen from among persons who are not officers of the Central Government or of any State Government." Besides, as per Section 6 (3) of the same chapter, the UGC vice-chairman shall officiate as chairman in the event of a casual vacancy.

However, informed sources in the government said, "It is purely an interim arrangement, which didn't arise out of a casual vacancy. Therefore, the question of any other UGC official or vice-chairman taking charge doesn't arise. The process of appointment of UGC chairman will follow in due course." CONTINUED ON: P9

CJI Khanna suggests Gavai as his successor

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY
@ New Delhi

THE Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna on Wednesday sent a proposal to the Union law ministry recommending Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai as his successor.

Justice BR Gavai

Khanna is set to retire on May 13. Gavai is presently the second-most senior judge of the court. He will become the 52nd CJI and will hold the post for six months before he retires on November 23. Justice Gavai joined the Bar in 1985. He was elevated as an additional judge of the Bombay High Court in November 2003. He became a permanent judge in November 2005.

He joined the Supreme Court on May 24, 2019. He has been part of several important verdicts.

In December 2023, a five-judge Constitution bench comprising Gavai unanimously upheld the Centre's decision to abrogate provisions of Article 370 bestowing special status to Jammu and Kashmir. He was also part of the Constitution bench, which annulled the electoral bonds scheme for political funding.

Gavai will be the second Dalit judge to become the CJI after Justice K G Balakrishnan was elevated to the post in 2007.

TARIFF TRACKER

- The WTO said the volume of trade in goods worldwide may decrease by 0.2% this year
- US tariffs will weaken credit conditions and raise defaults risks for low-rated, speculative grade corporates: Moody's | P11

245%

China faces tariffs of up to 245% due to its retaliatory actions, a White House fact sheet issued on Tuesday said

Guv sends Bill seeking 4% 'religion-based' quota to Prez

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

WHILE opposition parties are protesting against the state government's Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement (KTPP) Amendment Bill, which provides 4% reservation for Muslim contractors in government tenders, Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot has reserved the Bill for consideration and assent of the President of India, citing the Supreme Court's judgments and stating, "Reservation cannot be on the basis of religion."

The Bill was passed in both houses of Karnataka legislature last month, after which the BJP had appealed to the governor to reject the bill. The governor in his communication to the state government mentioned that the Bill seeks an amendment to increase the limit of the tender amount from Rs 1 crore to Rs 2 crore, "and to make provision for 4% reservation to be tendered only among the tenderers belonging to the Backward Classes as specified in Category - II(B)". P4

EXPRESS READ

K'taka relaxes age norm for Class 1 only for this year

Bengaluru: Karnataka on Wednesday issued orders relaxing the age limit for children enrolling in Class 1 from 6 years to 5.5 years for the 2025-26 academic year. The rule, applicable only for this academic year for schools under state board, comes after multiple requests from parents and a detailed review by the State Education Policy | P2

EXPRESS INTAKE

MUDA case: K'taka High Court notice to CM, others | P4

EPS contradicts Shah, says no coalition govt in TN in 2026 | P5